

Talking Points
NGA Opening Press Conference
Saturday, July 18, 2009
Gulfport

As host Governor, it's a great pleasure to welcome our distinguished guests to the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

As you enjoy this panoramic view, take a moment to imagine the scene almost four years ago when the worst natural disaster in American history was bearing down on everything you see.

- Casino barges ripped from their moorings and carried by an almost 30-foot storm surge across Highway 90, where they smashed into churches and office buildings
- Cargo taken from the Port and deposited into nearby neighborhoods, where it spoiled and created a real health hazard, not to mention monetary loss.
- Houses, businesses, schools destroyed.
- It was as if the hand of God simply came down and wiped everything away.

And in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, total destruction. Lives taken, families disrupted. The local economy a shambles.

But, Mississippians are a resilient people. They got knocked flat, then got up and starting helping themselves and their neighbors; they got on with life after Katrina.

So, much of what you will see over the next few days is either new or completely renovated, all part of the rebuilding, recovery and renewal after Hurricane Katrina.

One of the themes is infrastructure development. That has a special meaning here on the Gulf Coast.

In the fall of 2005, Congress appropriated \$5.4 billion for Mississippi's hurricane recovery effort, and we are grateful for it.

The federal government, state governments, churches and other non-profit organizations have all been critical to our recovery.

The recovery plan we starting implementing nearly four years ago has three main features:

- restoration of housing stock
- repair of public infrastructure (water systems, public facilities), and
- economic recovery through programs that retain jobs and stimulate job creation.

The state has developed 17 different recovery programs around the total \$5.4 billion CDBG appropriation.

To date, Mississippi has spent about \$3 billion of the \$5.4 billion, with virtually all Katrina CDBG funds committed to ongoing long-term recovery programs.

About 72 percent of the funding has been put into housing.

(NOTE: Much more detailed information on Mississippi's recovery is available on this thumb drive prepared by the Disaster Recovery Division of the Mississippi Development Authority.)

For now, I just want to say to my colleagues and their families, and to all of our other guests, welcome to Mississippi's Gulf Coast.

